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FSM 5100 – WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 5140 – HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT AND PRESCRIBED FIRE

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Approved: JAMES E. HUBBARD
Deputy Chief, S&PF

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Digest:

5140. Changes chapter caption from “Fire Use” to “Hazardous Fuels Management and

5140 - Changes chapter caption from "Fire Use" to "Hazardous Fuels Management and Prescribed Fire".

Revised in its entirety, to reflect changes in fire management policy and doctrine, and to be consistent with the recently revised FSM 5100 zero code. Relevant portions of FSM 5150 have been added and the obsolete chapter 5150 will be removed by separate amendment. References to the new Fire Management Planning Guide are added, as this Guide will replace the handbook at FSH 5109.19, chapter 50.

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This chapter provides direction on mitigating hazardous fuels and using fire to achieve desired

landscape conditions and attain Land and Resource Management Plan objectives.

5140.1 - Authority

See FSM 5101.

5140.2 - Objectives

1. Understand the role of fire on the landscape in order to integrate fire, as a critical natural process, into land and resource management plans, and develop achievable and sustainable Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) objectives that provide for landscapes which are resilient to fire related disturbances and climate change.
2. In cooperation with partners, strategically plan and implement on a landscape scale, risk-informed, and cost-effective hazardous fuel modification and vegetation management treatments (wildland fire (wildfire and prescribed), mechanical manipulation, biological, and chemical) to attain management objectives identified in Land and Resource Management Plans, to protect, sustain, and enhance resources and, where appropriate, emulate the ecological role of natural fire.

5140.3 - Policy

Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program applying:

1. Principles and policy elements described in FSM 5103 and Wildland Fire Doctrine (FSM 5131).
2. Principles from the Cohesive Strategy (A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Phase II National Report, May 2012).
3. Guidelines from The Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide (NWCG, PMS 484; see <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/RxFire/rx.htm>).
4. Consideration of greenhouse gas emissions and effects on carbon sequestration.

5140.31 - Hazardous Fuels and Prescribed Fire in Wilderness

1. Unplanned ignitions from lightning may be used to achieve wilderness objectives.
2. Forest Service Managers may ignite a prescribed fire in wilderness to reduce unnatural buildups of hazardous fuels only if necessary to meet at least one of the wilderness fire management objectives set forth in FSM 2324.21 and if all of the following conditions

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are met:

- a. The use of prescribed fire or other fuel treatment measures outside of wilderness is not sufficient to achieve fire management objectives within wilderness.
- b. An interdisciplinary team of Resource Specialists has evaluated and recommended the proposed use of prescribed fire.
- c. The interested public has been involved appropriately in the decision.
- d. The use of lightning-caused fires will pose serious threats to life and/or property within wilderness or to life, property, or natural resources outside of wilderness.
- e. Do not use prescribed fire in wilderness to benefit wildlife, maintain vegetative types, improve forage production, or enhance other resource values. Although these additional effects may result from a decision to use prescribed fire, use fire in wilderness only to meet wilderness fire management objectives.
- f. Do not use management ignited fire to achieve wilderness fire management objectives where lightning-caused fires can achieve them (FSM 2324).

5140.4 - Responsibility

5140.41 - Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

The Deputy Chief must communicate with the Regional Foresters to establish priorities and create a shared vision for the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program

5140.42 - Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management

The Director, Fire and Aviation Management must coordinate implementation of the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program by:

Collaborating with Federal and non-Federal partners to:

1. Develop qualification standards for personnel implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs;
2. Develop national standards and procedures for planning, establishing program priorities, and implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs.
3. Recommend to the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, national strategies, program priorities, and implementing measures to attain the National Cohesive Strategy

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vision “To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources: and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.”

4. Develop, provide oversight, and maintain systems to monitor the impacts and effectiveness of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs to achieve Agency goals and objectives.

5140.43 - Regional Foresters

Regional Foresters must:

1. Establish direction that supports the risk-based, strategically planned, prioritized, and cost-effective application of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices to achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
2. Ensure that Forests and Grasslands coordinate planning and implementation of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices with State and local cooperators and partners.
3. Manage and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program and ensure that Forests and Grasslands implement hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices in compliance with National and Regional policies and standards.

5140.44 - Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management

Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Coordinate and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program to monitor Forests and Grasslands compliance with National and Regional fire management policies and standards.
2. Coordinate the Regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program with the National program, ensuring accurate and timely reporting of all hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire activity.

5140.45 - Forest Supervisors

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Establish fire management direction in the Land and Resource Management Plan to integrate the role and use of wildland fire and hazardous fuels management in defining and achieving resource objectives.

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2. Ensure that the Fire Management Reference System (see the Fire Management Planning Guide, <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp>) is current and accurately reflects hazardous fuels management, wildfire response and prescribed fire implementation procedures and standards (FSM 5141).
3. Ensure a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment is conducted on all wildfires which start in or burn areas where hazardous fuels were treated (including treatments by wildfire) (FSM 5144).

5140.46 - District Rangers

District Rangers must:

1. Integrate the role and use of wildland fire and establish fire management direction to meet resource objectives in the Land and Resource Management plan and other applicable forest-level plans.
2. Assess conditions, plan, and implement a fuels program meeting National standards and Land and Resource Management Plan objectives.
3. Collaborate with State and local partners to coordinate hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects and activities.

5140.5 - Definitions

Administrative Burning - The burning of debris (forest vegetation) at administrative sites, sites under special use permit, or sites covered under formal agreements. The debris being burned is generated by routine administrative activities, such as fall leaf and needle raking, right-of-way clearing, and trimming or removal of trees and shrubs adjacent to structures for defensible space.

Hazard Fuel - A fuel complex defined by kind, arrangement, volume, condition, and location that presents a threat of ignition and resistance to control.

For additional definitions of terms used in this chapter, refer to FSM 5105.

5140.6 - References

Operational procedures contained in publications listed in FSM 5107 and the documents listed below are used by Forest Service personnel in the conduct of prescribed fire activities. The nature of the wildland fire environment is often dynamic, chaotic, and unpredictable and in such an environment, reasonable discretion in decision-making may be required. Thus, the body of procedures, best practices, concepts, and principles described in the listed publications should be

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considered the best guidance available for the majority of circumstances. Forest Service employees shall use their best judgment in applying the guidance contained in these references to real-life situations.

1. Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide (NWCG, PMS 484).
2. The guidance in the Fire Management Reference System (see the Fire Management Planning Guide, <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp>) (formerly FSH 5109.19).
3. Prescribed Fire Complexity Rating System Guide (NWCG, NFES 2474, PMS 424).
4. Prescribed Fire Smoke Management Guide (NWCG, NFES 1279, PMS 420-1).
5. NWCG PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide (NWCG PMS 310-1 and FSH 5109.17).
6. National Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092, <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/mobguide/index.html>).
7. Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13, 2009).

8. Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, Final Report, December 18, 1995.
9. Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NWCG, NFES 2724).
10. Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service Technical Note (2011).
http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1046311.pdf
11. Forest Service Fire & Aviation Qualification Guide (FSFAQG)
<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/publications/index.html>

5141 - HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT AND PRESCRIBED FIRE PLANNING

1. Overall direction for hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire is provided by the Land/Resource Management Plan. The LRMP serves as the document to initiate, analyze, and provide the basis for implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects to meet resource management objectives.
2. The broad direction for implementing the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program is documented in the Fire Management Reference System (see the Fire

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Management Planning Guide, <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp>).

3. Resource objectives for specific hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects are derived from the NEPA analysis. The entire project area must be analyzed

under NEPA. Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), and Categorical Exclusion (CE) will be used to identify objectives and analyze the effects of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects.

5142 - PRESCRIBED FIRE

5142.3 - Policy

1. When appropriate, use prescribed fire in a safe, carefully planned, and cost-effective manner to achieve desired conditions and attain management objectives identified in Land and Resource Management Plans (FSM 1920).
2. The NWCG Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide - PMS 484, is Forest Service policy (incorporated by reference at: <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfireguide.pdf>).
3. Declared wildfires.
 - a. Review all prescribed fires declared a wildfire. Use FSM 5137.1 and guidelines from the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide (NWCG, PMS 484) to dictate the nature and intensity of the review.
 - b. Wildfire response with Agency assets may be implemented without reimbursement if a Forest Service-initiated prescribed fire escapes onto non-National Forest or Grassland System lands (FSM 5133.1).
4. Weather conditions must be monitored during all phases (including mop up) of prescribed fire implementation.
 - a. Long-term weather conditions such as drought must be considered in all phases of prescribed fire planning and implementation.
 - b. A project-specific spot weather forecast must be obtained prior to ignition; for each day that ignition continues; on any day the fire is actively spreading; or when conditions adversely affecting the prescribed fire are predicted in the general forecast.
 - c. The authorizing Line Officer may make an exemption from the spot weather forecast requirement using criteria listed below. When daily spot weather forecasts are exempted, the general weather forecast must be reviewed daily until the

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prescribed burn is declared “out” to ensure prescribed fire and smoke management requirements are met. The line officer need only approve such an exemption once and it can be documented separately or on the Agency Administrators Ignition Authorization. The burn boss may then invoke the exemption after documenting that the conditions meeting the criteria have been observed.

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- (1) The general fire weather forecast for the Fire Weather Zone in which the prescribed burn is occurring is usually the same as any spot forecast within the Fire Weather Zone. This situation may occur in Fire Weather Zones which have little topographic relief.
- (2) There is a low threat of escape due to weather/fuel moisture conditions. This exemption is intended for situations such as burning piles with snow on the ground where fire cannot spread outside the burning pile on the day of the exemption.

5142.4 - Responsibility

5142.41 - Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

The Deputy Chief must ensure coordination with the State Foresters, relevant State and Federal

agencies, cooperators and partners to communicate the goals and objectives of the prescribed fire program.

5142.42 - Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management

The Director, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Advise Regions of national conditions (for example, asset constraints, broad scale weather patterns, wildland fire activity, and so forth) that may compromise the ability to support prescribed fire activities.
2. Develop and support training to qualify personnel to implement prescribed fire programs.
3. Ensure collection and analysis of Regional, Unit, and project Prescribed Fire Reviews to improve policy and implementation practices.

5142.43 - Regional Foresters

Regional Foresters must:

1. Establish guidance for approval of prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions and resource capability; and approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V.
2. Ensure Forest Supervisors are qualified to approve Prescribed Fire Burn Plans on Forests and Grasslands. See FSM 5142.51 for Forest Supervisor qualifications.

3. Conduct reviews (and report review results to the Chief within 90 days) of all prescribed fires resulting in serious or multiple personal injuries; that are converted to wildfire status and result in significant cost or social impacts, particularly to private or other agency lands; or result in the issuance of an air quality regulatory Notice-of-Violation from the State, air pollution control district, and/or county.

5142.44 - Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management

Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management must:

1. Provide oversight to ensure that Forests and Grasslands apply prescribed fire safely and cost effectively to achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
2. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester to establish guidance for approval of prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions and resource capability; and whether to approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V.
3. Monitor conditions and advise Forests and Grasslands of conditions which may compromise successful implementation of prescribed fire activities.
4. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester on the qualifications of Forest Supervisors to make Line Officer prescribed fire decisions on forests and grasslands. See FSM 5142.51 for Forest Supervisor qualifications.
5. Ensure forests complete a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment (see sec. 5144) (and enter assessment results in the Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring database within 90 days of control of the fire) on all wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment that has been completed within the last 10 years (within the last 3 years in the Southern Region or in portions of other regions designated by the Regional Forester).
6. Monitor prescribed fire activity and ensure accurate and timely reporting (tabular and spatial) of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity.

5142.45 - Forest Supervisors

Forest Supervisors must:

1. Approve or reject Prescribed Fire Plans, ensuring that Prescribed Fire Plans (RxBPs) are designed to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives, and meet service-wide and regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency

Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide. This authority may be delegated to a District Ranger on the basis of qualification, experience, and demonstrated

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ability (see FSM 5142.51).

2. Approve or disapprove ignition of new prescribed fire. This authority may be delegated to a District Ranger on the basis of qualification, experience, and demonstrated ability (see FSM 5140.7).

3. Request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V.

4. Ensure and document the relevant training and experience that demonstrate that personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Plans meet service-wide and regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide.

5. Ensure accurate and timely reporting of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity and report all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Regional Forester within 12 hours of the wildfire declaration. Report exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to the Regional Forester as soon as practicable.

6. Conduct reviews of all prescribed fires that are converted to wildfire status that do not meet criteria for a Regional Forester review (FSM 5142.42). Report the results of the review to the Regional Forester within 60 days after the wildfire declaration.

7. Ensure that prescribed fire personnel are trained in the After Action Review (AAR) process and that they routinely complete AARs after prescribed fire operations.

8. Conduct an administrative review or facilitated learning analysis on causes of any exceedances of the NAAQS associated with prescribed fire within three months of notification.

5142.46 - District Rangers

District Rangers must:

1. If delegated by the Forest Supervisor, approve or disapprove ignition of new prescribed fire, or request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V.
2. If delegated by Forest Supervisor, approve or reject Prescribed Fire Plans, ensuring that Prescribed Fire Plans (RxBPs) are designed to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives, and meet service-wide and regional requirements found in FSM 5140 and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide.

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3. Ensure that personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Plans meet service-wide and regional qualifications (FSM 5142.5) and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide.
4. Ensure adequate oversight and status reporting of all prescribed fires at the district level; reporting all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Forest Supervisor within 4 hours.
5. Report potential and actual exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality

5. Report potential and actual exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) as soon as practicable.

5142.5 - Qualifications for Implementing Prescribed Fire

5142.51 - Agency Personnel

1. Minimum qualifications for Forest Supervisors, District Rangers, other Line Officers, and formally delegated “Acting” Line Officers to approve Prescribed Fire Plans and authorize ignition are described in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NWCG, NFES 2724, Chapter 5).
2. Delegations for prescribed fire plan approval may be limited based upon the complexity of the prescribed fire. Delegations should be based on successful completion of the minimum training and experience as well as demonstrated ability. Document relevant training and experience that demonstrates sufficient prescribed fire management knowledge.
3. Additional qualification standards for prescribed fire implementation positions are described in the Forest Service Fire & Aviation Qualification Guide.

5142.52 - Contractors

Include qualifications requirements for any specific skill position that the Contractor must provide in any contracts for prescribed fire operations. Qualification clauses in contracts must require Contractors to meet requirements listed in NWCG PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide or FSH 5109.17 for positions (for example: RXB3) not included in NWCG PMS 310-1.

5142.6 - Prescribed Fire Plans

1. Prepare a site-specific Prescribed Fire Burn Plan as described in the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide for each prescribed fire in advance of the ignition. If more than 1 year has elapsed since approval, a burn plan will be reviewed, updated, as necessary, and approved before

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implementation.

2. The Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization (NWCG PMS 485) is required to be completed prior to ignition.
3. The Prescribed Fire Plan will specify who has the authority to declare a wildfire.

5142.7 - Prescribed Fire Operations and Organization

See the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide as referenced in FSM 5140.3.

5142.8 - Smoke Management

1. Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with Regional air quality specialists and Federal, State, Tribal, air pollution control district or county regulatory authorities to ensure compliance with their regulations which are supported by the Clean Air Act.
2. When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any airshed is impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will consider the cumulative impact to air quality which their management actions might cause and implement prescribed fire only if compliance with air quality regulations can be maintained.
3. All prescribed fires should be conducted using Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Forest Service Technical Note (2011).
http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb1046311.pdf

5143 - ADMINISTRATIVE BURNING

Administrative burning is exempted from the requirements of FSM 5140. This type of burning will adhere to local government debris burning requirements, air quality regulations or codes, and follow additional requirements as determined by the Forest Supervisor or other delegated Line Officer.

5144 - ASSESSING AND REPORTING HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATMENT EFFECTIVENESS

All wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment that has been completed within the last ten years (within the last three years in the Southern Region) must have a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment conducted and results entered into the Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database. All fuel treatment effectiveness assessments must be entered into

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the FTEM database within 90 days of control of the fire. Individual forests have the option of documenting interactions between wildfire and fuel treatments that are older than the ten years (three in Southern Region), where applicable.

Qualifying fuel treatments include all activities reported as fuels accomplishments in the Forest Activity Tracking System (FACTS). This includes management implemented activities (prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, and so forth) as well as unplanned events (such as wildfires, or portions of wildfires that were reported as accomplishment). Optional documentation such as written reports, photos, video, and such, may also be entered for archive in the database.

The Fuel Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) database can be found at the following website: www.fireportal.usda.gov. Links to User Guides, optional reporting templates, and other information related to the FTEM reporting requirement can be found at: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fam/fuels/hazardous.html>.

